



Donee Appreciation

They came from all over the state – more than 190 police, firefighters, educators, politicians, state employees, government officials, and representatives of U.S. Sen. Blanche Lincoln and Congressmen Vic Snyder and Marion Berry. Many of them arrived in trucks or pulling trailers.

The event? The second annual Donee Appreciation Day at the Federal Surplus Property warehouse in North Little Rock.

The attraction was an opportunity to see what was new at the warehouse, catch up with old friends, and perhaps get a bargain on some surplus property.

Not very many people went away empty-handed. In addition to the food – supplied by Ricky Lee and Subway Sandwiches and served by the chef and some of his students from the Arkansas Rehabilitation Center – a slew of door prizes were given out. And a lot of people did some “shopping” for their agency or nonprofit organization.

William Sanders of FSP said the staff wrote up 35 invoices Thursday to the tune of about \$30,000 worth of property, including beds, wardrobe lockers, tools, and other smaller items. (On a normal day, FSP handles 8-12 invoices on property ranging in value from \$600-\$6,000.)

As the guests chomped down on sandwiches and cookies, some were bragging about their latest surplus acquisitions – a generator that really did the job, an airplane that made traveling around the state much quicker, a sofa that spruced up an office.

During a brief program, Bill Barnes of the Joplin Volunteer Fire Department spoke about the benefits of FSP. With local fund-raisers as its sole source of funding, he said, the Joplin fire department can make its dollars stretch a whole lot further at FSP. He figured 30 percent to 40 percent of the equipment the department uses comes from the warehouse. Barnes encouraged all those attending to become associate members. The \$35 cost of membership funds the National Association of State Agencies for Surplus Property so it can push for the continuance of the program in Washington. In his remarks as a guest speaker, Attorney General Mike Beebe also praised the program, which helps organizations in every county in Arkansas.

FSP began hosting the appreciation lunch last year “just to say thank you. . . . We exist to serve them (the organizations that get the surplus property),” Jim Smith, manager, says. It also creates a great opportunity to get both positive and constructive feedback about the program – sort of like a “super focus group,” he adds.

Last year, FSP donated \$8.6 million in surplus property to nearly 2,000 agencies and organizations in Arkansas. In exchange, those groups – or donees – paid a handling fee, usually pennies on the dollar of the value of the property, to cover FSP’s cost in getting the items. For Jim, that’s a win-win situation as it limits waste in federal government and provides much-needed resources for local government agencies and nonprofit organizations.

